



# Daily News Bulletin

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85th Year

## TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

### 2 Israelis wounded in ambush

Two Israelis were wounded when Palestinian gunmen fired at their car Wednesday near the West Bank settlement of Ateret.

One of the victims was described in moderate condition after being shot in the stomach. His 19-year-old nephew sustained a light wound to the hand.

In another incident, Palestinians fired three rockets at an Israeli community in the Negev on Wednesday night. One person was lightly hurt and the roof of one house was hit, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

### House passes P.A. sanctions

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill instructing the president to issue sanctions if the Palestinian Authority violates its peace commitments. The State Department Authorization Act, passed Wednesday by a voice vote, includes language contained in the Middle East Peace Commitments Act.

The bill calls on the president to report every six months whether Palestinian leaders have complied with agreements they signed with the United States and Israel and, if not, to impose sanctions on them. However, the president can choose to waive the sanctions for national security reasons.

The authorization act also would require the American Consulate in Jerusalem to be placed under the supervision of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Jerusalem residents as Israelis. [Page 4]

### Peres: No dispute with U.S.

Israeli-U.S. ties remain solid despite a U.S. call for Israel to lift its siege of Yasser Arafat's Ramallah headquarters, Shimon Peres said.

Asked about White House criticism of the siege, Israel's foreign minister told Israel Radio on Wednesday that "sometimes there are contradictions between" the way the two countries see things, "but this is not a dispute."

Israel says it will not withdraw from the compound until approximately 200 people holed up inside surrender. It alleges that about 50 of the people, including Palestinian intelligence chief Tawfik Tirawi, have been involved in terror attacks on Israelis. Tirawi denied the allegations in an interview with the Israeli daily newspaper Ma'ariv and vowed not to surrender.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### What Israelis talk about when they use the word 'matzav'

By Jessica Steinberg

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Hebrew word "matzav," or situation, used to be a fairly innocuous term for most Israelis.

"Ma hamatzav," they would ask one another — what's up? It is a question that does not always require an answer.

Or they would say "Yesh matzav," which can mean something is brewing.

A person can be "metzuvrach," someone who is sad or hurting.

These days, however, if you ask about the matzav, there is only one situation in mind: the conflict with the Palestinians.

As Israel approaches the second anniversary of the intifada, the term used most often to describe the overall state of affairs is "hamatzav," or "the situation."

In fact, within a week after the first rocks were thrown in late September 2000, one Tel Aviv paper wrote the following headline: "Yesh Matzav," or "There is a Situation."

"It's a word with a negative connotation," says Ruvik Rosenthal, language columnist for the Ma'ariv newspaper. "According to the dictionary definition, it's a neutral word. But in daily usage, it has a connotation of tension, sadness, problems."

For Rosenthal, one of the nation's word masters, matzav was the word of the year for 5762, the Jewish year that just ended. It is one of those expressions that is Israeli in its very essence. It is "our ambassador word," he said.

According to the Yehuda Gur dictionary, the word "matzav" was first used several times in the Bible, referring to a person's physical stance or station.

It wasn't until the 14th century that Rabbi Yitzhak Bar Sheshet, who lived in Spain during the massacre of Jews in 1391, used the word "matzav" in a responsa to indicate one's existential situation, perhaps referring to the persecution of the Jews, said professor David Golinkin, president and rector of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, and one of the leading authorities on Jewish law in the Conservative movement in Israel.

"He used the word in the modern sense," Golinkin said.

More than 600 years later, it is the word Israelis use most often to describe a situation without an obvious solution.

On [www.thematzav.com](http://www.thematzav.com), a Web site depicting the lives of Israelis during the conflict, the matzav is described as the situation Israelis live with every day.

It is "the mile-long traffic jam that could be a security check or a bombed bus. It's your son, father, husband called up for mandatory reserve duty in a scary place. It's the morbid thought that the bus or mall you are entering may be your last," according to the site.

Even when someone says "Matzav tov," which means everything is OK, the understanding is that "it's good but temporary," added Rosenthal. If you ask about someone's matzav ruach, their state of mind, it is understood that they aren't doing well.

"It's hard to explain this word, hard to translate it," he said. "Hamatzav is our friend. We know it. It is a citizen of this state."

Before the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1948, the Jews living in prestate Palestine talked about "the matzav" the way Israelis do today. To them, it signified the situation they all shared, namely, how to win the ongoing battle for the creation of the Jewish state.

As such, it is a word reminiscent of a certain time and place — of the prestate

## MIDEAST FOCUS

### Palestinian reformers threatened

The military wing of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement threatened a group of Palestinian officials who have been attempting to appoint a prime minister to share power with Arafat. "At a time when the Palestinian people are supporting President Arafat, a group of collaborators, in coordination with Israel and the United States, seeks to create an alternative leadership," the Al-Aksa Brigade said in a leaflet published Wednesday.

After the leaflet was published, Arafat's second in command, Mahmoud Abbas, denied reports that he had been involved in power-sharing talks. He also denied that there have been any such talks since Israel launched its siege of Arafat's headquarters last week. "There is no way to discuss such issues while our president is under such cruel and unprecedented aggression," Abbas told The Associated Press.

### Terrorists' homes destroyed

Israeli soldiers destroyed three homes in the West Bank that belonged to Palestinian terrorists. One of the homes demolished Wednesday belonged to the leader of Hamas in Hebron.

In another development, the army lifted curfews for several hours in the West Bank cities of Tulkarm and Ramallah on Wednesday to allow residents to stock up on supplies. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli soldiers destroyed three abandoned buildings after finding anti-tank missiles inside, Army Radio reported.

### New homes at settlement outpost

Israeli settlers planned to break ground for 14 permanent homes at a West Bank settlement outpost. Located near Nablus, Rehalim began in 1991 as an outpost established to mark the spot where Palestinian gunmen killed two Israelis. Twenty-four families have been living in three mobile-home neighborhoods in Rehalim, according to the Jerusalem Post.



## Daily News Bulletin

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militias, the siege on Jerusalem and the smuggling of illegal immigrants.

This time around, it was street usage that brought it back into the daily vernacular, but the Israeli army increased its usage when it used hamatzav to describe the increasingly violent conflict, according to Rosenthal.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon "uses it all the time, and it's fitting for him because he's retro," said Rosenthal, referring to Sharon's previous career as an army officer from the War of Independence through the Yom Kippur War.

These days retro is in, as Israelis are harking back to seemingly simpler, safer times. They want to ignore the perils of the present, and word usage is part of the technique.

For some, however, the usage of the word "matzav" indicates avoidance.

"It's an inclusive word that refers to everything, usually an unhappy state of affairs," said Yaron Ezrahi, a political science professor at Hebrew University. "People know something is going on, but if they use this word, they don't have to get into a whole discussion."

For Ezrahi, who heads the media and communications project at the Israel Democracy Institute, it isn't necessarily interesting why Israelis use the word "matzav"; what fascinates him is why they don't use the other words that describe the more controversial roots and causes of the current conflict.

"We aren't used to dealing with the causes of the conflict," he said. "So instead we use a neutral word, an economical word that doesn't require saying anything specific about terror, occupation or the political situation."

In a special section that appeared last week, the Jerusalem Post noted the propaganda gain for the Palestinians when their term for the two-year-old conflict, the "Al-Aksa Intifada," was accepted worldwide.

"It specifies a locus to the conflict, a starting point, a purpose and a method" — all from the Palestinian perspective, editor Bret Stephens wrote.

Remarkable, Stephens wrote, "is the failure by Israelis and Diaspora Jews to offer an alternative vocabulary" of their own. "We speak of the matzav, 'the situation,' which loudly bespeaks the lack of any shared clarity about the meaning and purpose of this war. It's as if this is one question Israelis do not have the energy, the imagination, perhaps even the courage to address."

The paper asked prominent Israelis from across the political spectrum to name the war to best express the Israeli view of the conflict. Entries included "The Oslo War," "The Camp David War," "The War for a Palestinian Land" and "The War Against Peace."

Truth be told, though, Israelis don't like talking about the situation. They might debate whether to go out because of the security situation, but once they're sitting at a café table drinking cappuccino, the political state of the nation is not a favored topic.

"We never talk about the situation when we're with our friends," one Israeli judge said when asked his opinion on the matzav.

And with good reason, explained Penina Feller, an anthropologist who specializes in ancient Eastern culture.

Feller said, "When we're scared of something, we try not to let that word pass through our mouth. There's a fear of describing something, so we give it a more general term."

In Israel, there is no consensus on the security situation. Everyone has his or her own opinion on its causes, effects and future, so it's better to speak of it with caution.

"We need something to describe what's going on, so we choose a word that is obscure," Feller said. "We say it, but not exactly."

Why not use intifada, the Arabic word for "shaking off" or uprising?

Not a chance, linguists said.

The Palestinians "use intifada because it's their word," Rosenthal said.

Matzav covers it all: the terror attacks and their victims, the army and its operations, the government and its decisions, the deteriorating economic situation, Israel's international isolation.

"It's a word that means heaviness," Rosenthal said. "If a secondhand car is advertised as matzav tov" — in good condition — "that means it's about to break down. Zeh hamatzav: This is the situation, and there's nothing we can do about it. Zeh ma she'yesh" — this is what there is — "and we have to make do with what we have." □

## JEWISH WORLD

### LAX shooter had terror ties?

The man who killed two people in the July 4 attack at the Los Angeles Airport told U.S. officials in the mid-1990s that Egyptian officials had accused him of being affiliated with terrorists.

As a result of the disclosure made this week by U.S. officials regarding Hesham Mohamed Hadayet, Attorney General John Ashcroft ordered the agency to investigate any ties between asylum seekers and terrorist groups.

Meanwhile, Egyptian police and Hadayet's wife denied that Hadayet had been investigated for terrorist links.

After killing the two and injuring several more people at the airport's El Al ticket counter, Hadayet was killed by an El Al security guard.

### Court to review Sharon ruling

A Belgian court is slated to hear an appeal Thursday of a lower court decision's not to try Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for war crimes.

In June, the lower court ruled that Sharon could not be tried in absentia in connection with a massacre in Lebanon's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982, when Sharon was the Jewish state's defense minister.

Israeli officials said they were unaware that Thursday's hearing was to take place, according to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

### Choreographer wins MacArthur

A choreographer who has created dance prayer rituals for the Reconstructionist movement won a MacArthur "genius" award.

Liz Lerman was one of 24 MacArthur Fellows named Tuesday for their excellence in intellectual, cultural and scientific endeavors.

Like the other winners, Lerman, 54, who lives in suburban Washington, will receive \$500,000 over five years.

### Jews more susceptible to drug

Ashkenazi Jews are significantly more susceptible than other people to a potentially life-threatening blood disorder if they use the drug Clozapine to treat schizophrenia, according to a new study.

The specific set of genes thought to be associated with the disorder is found in 10 percent to 12 percent of the Jewish population in Israel and the United States, but in less than 1 percent of the total white population of the United States, the study says.

Set to be published as a supplement to the October Journal of the National Medical Association, the study focuses on how responses to medications among minority patients can vary based on genetic, cultural and environmental factors.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES

### Insurance agreement is step forward for Holocaust survivors

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Holocaust survivors and their heirs are one step closer to receiving compensation for unpaid insurance claims.

After years of stalled negotiations, the commission focusing on Holocaust-era claims came to an agreement with German insurance companies last week on how to proceed. But it's unclear how fast payments can be made because lists of policyholders must be drawn up and matched against rosters of German Jews before and during the Holocaust.

While the agreement does not take effect until it is signed, which could take a few more weeks, it shows some effectiveness on the part of the much-derided International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims.

ICHEIC will work with the German insurance industry to distribute \$100 million for claims and claims-related expenses. Another \$50 million has been set aside if more money is needed.

In addition, \$175 million will be used for humanitarian purposes, though the details of that funding are still being ironed out.

The deadline for filing claims has been extended to March 30, 2003.

The German insurance companies agreed to investigate claims in accordance with looser standards and guidelines approved by ICHEIC. At the last minute, the companies dropped a demand to be reimbursed for certain expenses in processing claims, paving the way for the final agreement. ICHEIC is composed of the Claims Conference, the World Jewish Restitution Organization, representatives of Israel, several large European insurers and American and European insurance regulators.

Both ICHEIC member Allianz and smaller German companies that are not part of ICHEIC agreed to abide by the terms of the agreement, which should increase the number of claims processed. In fact, several thousand claims that had been submitted but not acted upon should be paid this year, according to Dale Franklin, the commission's Washington chief of staff.

The agreement calls for a list of approximately 5 million major policyholders to be matched against lists of Jews who lived in Germany between 1933 and 1938. The results will be published on the ICHEIC Web site at [www.icheic.org](http://www.icheic.org).

The lists could take months to compile. Once they are complete, companies would have to notify claimants of the status of their claims within 90 days after the claims are filed. But Franklin indicated that the agreement helps the claims process over a high hurdle, since German firms are believed to make up about half of the total insurance market for the period in question.

Other major, non-German insurance companies in ICHEIC — such as AXA, Winterthur and Zurich — are working toward global settlements like the one already reached by ICHEIC member Generali over a year ago, Franklin said.

Still, there are many insurance companies in other Eastern European countries that have not agreed to be a part of any claims process.

Jewish organizations appear eager to move things along.

"We've waited 60 years and we have no more time left," said Gideon Taylor, executive vice president of the Claims Conference. "We have to make this agreement work, and work fast."

ICHEIC Chairman Lawrence Eagleburger called the agreement a "major achievement." Eagleburger conducted the talks with Germany's Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation, which was established in 2000 to compensate survivors and is funded jointly by the German government and German insurance companies.

U.S. lawmakers and Holocaust survivors have criticized ICHEIC for working too slowly and not getting money to policyholders or their heirs.

At a hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives' Government Reform Committee last year, ICHEIC was deemed a "failure." Now, said Roman Kent, chairman of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, who praised Eagleburger's efforts, the agreement would bring "a measure of justice" to survivors and their heirs. □

## U.S. House passes an act requiring Palestinian compliance

By Matthew E. Berger

WASHINGTON (JTA) — After years of arguing for sanctions against the Palestinians, Congress has approved a measure that calls on the president to punish Palestinian leaders if they are not complying with signed agreements.

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed the committee report of the State Department Authorization Act.

More than a year ago, pro-Israel lawmakers added the measure, the Middle East Peace Commitments Act, to the bill, and it survived the conference committee.

The language calls on the president to assess twice a year whether the Palestinian leadership has adhered to agreements it signed with the United States and Israel, and if not, to administer one or more of several defined sanctions.

The sanctions range from downgrading the Washington office of the Palestine Liberation Organization to cutting nonhumanitarian aid to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or placing the PLO or Palestinian Authority on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization list.

The Authorization Act also requires the State Department to take new steps toward recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. If the legislation passes, the State Department would be required to bring the American Consulate in Jerusalem under the auspices of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and to list Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in listings of countries and their capitals.

"What is needed is consistency," said Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), who sponsored the bill when it was introduced last year.

"With this legislation we are finally closing the gap between all our tough talk about terrorism and the reality of our heedless engagement with the Palestinians, no matter how deeply enmeshed in terror they are."

The bill, once prominently touted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, was essentially abandoned by Jewish leaders after President Bush's June 24 speech, in which he called for a new Palestinian leadership and sought reforms that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

But the MEPCA language had been sitting in the authorization bill for more than a year, placed there without fanfare in order to avoid a confrontation.

"In Washington, as in the Middle East, the dead are revivable," Ackerman joked.

Authorization bills, which direct Congress' policy priorities for government agencies, are often tied up in political disputes and bypassed straight to the appropriations process, which allocates the funds to the agencies.

Since that time, AIPAC and other Jewish groups have rallied behind a stronger bill, dubbed the Arafat Accountability Act, which sought similar sanctions, but did not ask the president to assess the Palestinian actions. Lawmakers argued that Palestinian actions had made the assessment process unnecessary.

After the June speech, the Arafat bill was reworked. Now being debated as part of the foreign operations appropriations process is language that would prevent any funds going to the Palestinian state until it meets certain conditions, including new leadership, a constitution and measures to prevent terrorism.

Ackerman said he believes that with the tougher bills floating through the halls of Congress, MEPCA is now being viewed as a compromise.

"I'm sure there are people that feel this is less harsh than the Arafat Accountability Act, which we are going to push anyway," said Ackerman, one of the sponsors of that bill as well.

The MEPCA bill is no longer on AIPAC's Web site as a legislative priority. But the organization hailed the bill's impending passage.

"By including this language in the conference report, the Congress is sending a clear message," Rebecca Needler, AIPAC's spokeswoman, said before the vote was taken.

"If Palestinian leaders do not demonstrate a commitment to fighting terror, they will be held accountable."

Last year, lawmakers tried to slip the MEPCA language into the appropriations bills.

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) included the MEPCA language in the foreign operations appropriations bill, but it was downgraded in conference committee to a suggestion that the president impose sanctions, rather than a requirement that he do so.

In addition, appropriations bills only have a one-year life span. By placing this language in an authorization bill, it will be law until it is overridden by another piece of legislation.

If the MEPCA bill is likely to become law, the Bush administration is not expected to act on it.

Instead, it may fold the mandated report into the Palestine Liberation Organization Commitment Compliance Act report it already writes twice a year. As for the sanctions, the president is likely to waive them out of the interest of national security, a State Department official said.

"We'd certainly optimize the national security waiver on an issue such as this," the official said. The State Department has opposed almost all of the legislation Congress has conceived over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, claiming it ties the hands of the Bush administration.

"There is an active reform effort under way, and we want to have the ability to support that effort without being compromised by legislation such as this."

But Ackerman said he believes the measures have merit even if they are not implemented. "We want to place certain markers down, and this is one of them," he said. □

## Israeli Arab warned of attack

JERUSALEM (JTA) — An Israeli Arab seriously wounded in a suicide bombing in northern Israel had alerted police before the attack.

Israeli police initially suspected that Rami Mahamid, 17, helped the bomber carry out the Sept. 18 attack near the Israeli Arab city of Umm el-Fahm. It later emerged that Mahamid was the person who first reported the presence of a suspicious person to police. Mahamid struck up a conversation with the terrorist and asked to borrow his cell phone on the pretext of calling a friend, reports said. Instead, Mahamid called police and asked them to send a patrol.

When the police van arrived, the bomber blew himself up, killing an officer and wounding three other people, including Mahamid. Police awarded Mahamid a medal Wednesday for his actions. □